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THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF JOHN PERCIVAL.

BY MRS OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN PERCIVAL was the nephew of a banker in Edinburgh, destined from his childhood to the service of the bank—which was considered by all the family the greatest good luck that could have happened to a boy. His uncle, who like the boy was John Percival, and who was his godfather—or namefather, as we say in Scotland—as well as his uncle and his patron, and was connected with him by every possible tie, was a childless man—childless, too, in the most secure way, not an old bachelor who might marry at any moment, but a staid married man with a wife younger than himself, yet not so young as to be dangerous. He was, though the old man did not say so, nor do anything to raise expectations, universally considered as his uncle's heir; and did so consider himself calmly, without impatience or preoccupation with the subject, and very far from wishing to shorten his uncle's life by a single day. He was thought the most fortunate boy in the family; but I don't think he considered himself as such, and especially when he set out on a wintry day at noon in the stage-coach for Duntrum, a large provincial town in the south of Scotland. It may be divined that it was not to-day or yesterday, according to the popular phrase, when this journey took place: for nowadays one whisks off from Edinburgh to Duntrum in the morning, and whisks back again at night, having several hours in which to do one's business between, and no fatigue to speak of. It was very different in those days, when from noon to nearly midnight the coach joggled over the frost-bound country; and even in his corner in the interior, where John was forced to place himself by the anxieties of his elders, who kept up a pleasing fiction that he was delicate—

it was very difficult even under a pile of plaids and topcoats to keep warm. He was going to serve for a year in the bank at Duntrum to give him a knowledge of country business and the ways of rustic depositors and clients, a knowledge which John felt to be very unnecessary, seeing that his life was to be spent, not in Duntrum, but in Edinburgh, and at the least in the manager's office, not at the counter selling money as if it were tea or sugar. He did not like this change of scene at all, perhaps because the season was at its height in Edinburgh, and all the entertainments of the year hurrying upon each other; but chiefly because it was the sordid side of business, the lower part of the profession, as this foolish young man thought, which he was being sent to study. He did not appreciate the advantage of knowing everything connected with his trade, which the elders know so much better than the young people. Indeed, to tell the truth, he was not sure at all that he was fond of banking, or thought it every way so superior an employment as many people thought. His own opinion was that if he were left at peace to live upon his own little bit of money, and pursue his own tastes, he would be a much happier man. He had a notion, indeed, that he might possibly turn out a great painter or a great writer if he were thus left to himself to cultivate the best that was in him. It was a pity that he felt the possibilities were equal in respect to these two pursuits. It might be either which would bring him fame and fortune, but certainly one of them. If he had been sure that it was either this or that, there would have been more hope for John: but he was not sure—he thought at one time he could

have been a painter, had he time and encouragement to try, and then again another time that he could be a novelist or a poet. Perhaps on the whole it was just as well for him, that with such excellent prospects, and the certainty of coming to a good end, if he behaved himself, he should have been what he was—a banker's clerk.

But whatever it might end in eventually, it was very hard lines, he thought, that he should have to leave Edinburgh in the middle of the season when everything was in full swing. There was not much in those days, at least not the tenth part so much as now, of football and golf. These games were played, but they were not the essence of life. Strange to say, young men found other things to talk about, other things to occupy them which were not all deleterious. For one thing they took a great deal more interest in dances and all sorts of assemblies, in which the boys met with the girls of their own class, than the ordinary run of 'manly young fellows' do now. I suspect they fell in love much more freely than they do now. They wanted to meet, to talk to, to laugh with these girls, as they like now to make themselves comfortable in a smoking-room, or rave about breaking a record on the links. I do not say which is best, not knowing; but at least one must confess that it is quite different. It is possible that John had even more than one incipient flirtation on his hands. He did not at all like to leave, for a hum-drum provincial town near the Border, with all its local questions and prejudices which he would not understand, the cheerful bustle of Edinburgh, the gay assemblies and all the private entertainments that abounded at this cheerful time of the year.

'Good-bye, my boy: we'll see you back whenever there's anything great going on,' said one of the friends who were seeing him off. There was a little group of them round the coach door, bright-faced young men who had made a dart from the offices of several Writers to the Signet, or even from the Parliament House—to see the last of Percival, as they said.

'Perhaps,' said John with satirical bitterness, 'if well-founded information reaches the bank that the world is coming to an end.'

'In that case you may stay where you are,' said the other; 'we'll have enough to do thinking of ourselves. Hallo!' said this young man, feeling himself vigorously pushed aside from the coach door. This was the arrival of another passenger, by whom the group of young men were pushed aside to right and left by that free use of elbows and personal momentum, which an energetic woman of the lower orders uses with so little scruple. This was a strong and vigorous maid-servant of middle age and weighty person, leading a veiled and muffled personage who followed her closely, and who bore the aspect of an old lady afflicted with toothache or 'tic,' or one of those affections of the face which were then treated freely with enveloping wraps to keep out the cold, and external applications, and a total indifference to personal appearance. Indeed, in this case, as the face was entirely invisible, a thick veil of Spanish lace, in a large pattern of heavy

and close design, covering the small amount which was not entirely obliterated by plaster and poultice applied to the right cheek, there was not perhaps any inducement even to undying vanity to attempt modification or concealment. The identity of the veiled person it was quite impossible to divine—her wrapped-up head was like a melon, a 'sport' with one great bulge on the right side—a faint glimmer of an eye between the crevices of the lace pattern, a little colour, was all that was apparent; feature and form and expression were all lost in the portentous envelopments. She clung close to her protector with old and tremulous steps, and occasionally a faint waggle of the mis-shapen and enormous head.

'Can ye no see it's an auld leddy with the rheumatics in her head—and jist you get out of the way, my fine callants, that kenna what trouble is. Gang round to the other side of the coach if you have any more blethers to say. Steady, mem, steady! take your time, this is the town corner, the furdest frae the winds: and I'll pull up the window-glass, and ye'll not feel a breath. You'll jist be as safe as gin ye were in your auld chair with the wings at hame.'

During this speech, to which the young men listened awe-struck, the old lady was carefully and with much precaution hoisted into the coach, a process which seemed more difficult than her short stature and apparently insignificant figure seemed to justify, the stout woman-servant growing redder and redder under the strain, although assisted by a porter who pushed from behind. When the process was accomplished the boys burst into a genial but suppressed laugh, with significant looks at John, who for his part could not but regard with a certain fascination the mass of nodding headgear which was to be his companion in the long drive. He could not take his gaze from her. The cold journey to Duntrum leaving dinners and assemblies behind, was reason enough for despondency: but to travel with Medusa herself in a mail-coach! if by any chance the wrappings might come off, and her unfortunate fellow-passenger be turned to stone.

'I give you joy, Jack,' whispered one of the attendant youths; 'here's a bonny bride to bear you company.'

'I'll tell May Laurie you were in capital fettle; a fair lady by your side and plenty of time to make your court.'

'Nothing of the sort, Jack, my lad; I'll let her know you were preserved from every temptation,' cried another—all this in not quite inaudible whispers, at the other door.

John was glad when the coach finally started, leaving all these laughing faces behind; for he had a tender heart and was remorseful at the thought of perhaps wounding an old and suffering person for whom he had on the contrary the greatest compassion. True, it was dreadful to see that mis-shapen head nodding from the opposite corner, and to know that whatever happened he must be its companion for so many hours. A horrible doubt seized him whether it would be possible for her to go so far without occasion to change her poultice

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or undo her cerements. He thought of the *Veiled Prophet*, then just published, and wondered whether he might not have some ghastly revelation to undergo like that of the horrified hero. He thought in spite of himself of ill-smelling ointments and other sickening appliances. Poor creature! it might be a question with her of ease from distracting pain, or she might go on suffering, unwilling to expose her inflamed cheek, or run the risk of disgusting her companion. Poor old body! John tried to turn his back on her, to keep his eyes diverted on the view from the opposite window: but there was a fascination in the unknown which drew him back. He stole glances at her against his will as if she had been a young beauty. He would have given much to see what was underneath the thick silken flowers of the veil, even though he was sure it would be chiefly poultices bound up with white-and-black handkerchiefs. These modes of wrappings were visible sometimes on Edinburgh streets as they are on those of Paris to-day. It would not be a pleasant sight: still it would be better than the mystery in the corner which sat there, like an image of stone, never showing any sign of life but by the occasional nodding of the distorted head. Was it palsy too, poor soul? had she all the ills that flesh is heir to? John was very sympathetic. The sight of that wrapped-up mass of suffering in the corner affected him very much. He would fain have done something to show his pity. He began to calculate how he should manage to help her out when the coach came to its first stopping-place to change horses and to afford the passengers an opportunity for 'a snack.' Probably she would not be able to take a snack or exert her suffering jaws. He thought perhaps he might get her some broth, which would give her no trouble except the trouble of undoing her veil. Broth was always to be had in a Scotch village about dinner-time. It would warm and comfort her, and perhaps even she could take it without undoing anything. He had a horrible desire to see the coverings undone, and yet he had so kind a heart that he would have been glad to think she could take a little broth without any trouble in that way, poor old soul!

However, he did his best to read his book for an hour or two, turning his mind from the lady in the corner. He would be out of temptation those fellows said. Well, yes, he was out of temptation in one way: but if his fellow-traveller had only been a moderately well-looking woman, even though young and responsive, he did not know that he would have been so much in temptation as with this mystery in the opposite corner, though he felt sure it was a repulsive mystery, and probably would have a sickening, and not an enticing effect upon him. But he said to himself he would just like to know what it was. Poor thing! perhaps it was a dreadful embarrassment to her to find a man opposite to her, to be hampered in any effort to relieve herself which she might have made if alone. He could see that she pressed herself more and more into the corner and leaned the weight of her poor head on the cushions. By

degrees it occurred to him that he might make her more comfortable if she would allow him to make a roll of one of his plaids and put it at the place where no doubt her neck came, so that she could support her head more comfortably. He pondered over this a long time, and experimented on himself how he could do it, before, with much timidity and as fine a blush as if he had been aiding a beautiful princess, he at last ventured to speak.

'The cushions,' he said, 'are not very soft in these coaches.'

The melon with the bulging side turned round to him with a swiftness he could not have thought possible, but nothing was said.

'I've been thinking,' said John, 'I've seen it done in—in my own family. You see, you roll up a thing like a small bolster, and then you place it just where your neck comes'—

He exemplified what he meant by rolling up a large comforter knitted in dazzling white wool, quite new and of his Aunt John's choicest manufacture, made expressly for this journey. It was large and soft, and John rolled it close till it became as round and smooth as a bolster according to his homely simile.

'If you will let me,' he said, rising, 'I think I could place this'—

There was an agitated movement inside the draperies, and a voice that made John jump, between a squeak and a scream, came as it seemed out of the top of the mis-shapen head, 'No! no! I cannot be touched. No! no!'

It made John jump; but after all, what was a voice any more than the other appearances, to daunt him when he had so honest an intention of doing well? He came a step nearer. 'I am sure you will find it more'—

'No! keep away. No, keep away!' the voice repeated with shrill decision, not at all softened but made still more bewildering by a sudden tremor at the end. He paused for a moment with his white roll in his hand, and he distinctly saw the veiled figure shake with a strange sort of broken vibration, as if in one access after another of palsy, was it? or, if not, what else? He did not know what else it could be. He stood for a moment wavering, and then he retired and threw down the comforter impatiently upon the seat. 'Well,' he said, with a sigh also of impatience, 'if you won't have it I cannot help it: still I am sure I could have made you more comfortable,' he added, recovering his good-humour. And he resumed his book: but his attention was sadly distracted; for that spasmodic movement went on at intervals; and there even broke forth certain stifled sounds—was it moaning, was it the signal of some approaching calamity? He gazed earnestly over the top of his book, with a most compassionate face, and held himself on the alert to give any aid he could. But after a while his apprehensions were quieted: there seemed no reason to suppose that anything was going to happen, and these mysterious movements died away.

The lady, however, refused the broth which he procured for her when they stopped, at the risk of having no time for his own 'snack.' She rejected it with the same sharp squeaking voice as before, and with something of the

same strangely convulsive movements, darting away from her corner, when he suddenly opened the door at her side, with a swiftness which it was impossible to suppose such a wrapped-up mummy could be capable of, and an evident fright which piqued him a little. 'No; keep away!' she squeaked again. What a cankered, sour, shrill, old woman! What did she suppose he wanted with her? It was not for her *beaux yeux* certainly. But he had heard that some women always, however old and ugly they may be, imagine a man wants to make love to them. He laughed at this to himself as he went off to get his 'snack,' and as ten minutes with a powerful young appetite can do a great deal, succeeded fully in indemnifying himself. For the moment he was vexed with this second repulse; but no such feeling had long the mastery in John's honest bosom. There were some fine golden oranges on the table, and he put two or three into his pocket, before he went back to the coach. Perhaps she might like one in the dark hours that were coming before they reached Duntrum, when there would be no light to see by, whatever faces she might make, if she put aside the veil. He put two of them gently on the seat beside her when he returned to the coach: but the mummy only gave a grotesque fling farther back into her corner, and took no notice. Yet once again John made an attempt to be of service to her. It was when the guard, as they passed through the small town of Dunscore, as the evening fell, opened the door hurriedly, and flung in a bundle of postbags, two or three attached to each other with a strap, their metal padlocks shining in the glow of his lantern. 'Last stage afore Duntrum,' said the guard. It was his habit to place the mails there at this point of his journey, in order to give them up to the Duntrum authorities without delay.

'That is scarcely very safe' said John ingratiatingly to his silent companion, 'suppose you or I were less honest than we seem.' He laughed, but his laugh died out of itself in that shamefaced way in which a laugh quenches itself when made at our own joke, and falling flat without response. But presently, after a while, he suggested, which was very true, that it was getting cold, and asked if she had enough wraps, or would accept one of his. This seemed to overcome altogether the patience of the veiled lady in the corner. She told him sharply to mind his own business. 'There's nothing wanted from you,' she said. The voice was odd, the shrill one alternating with a softer note as if two people were speaking. It had almost become a point of honour with John to overcome this persistent defiance. He approached with one of his plaids outspread, and laid it gently about her knees. The answer was a vivacious movement kicking it away.

'Will you not take a telling?' cried the shrill voice. 'Away! and snoodle yourself in your corner, and let me be quit of you!' The voice was so fierce that John fell back in spite of himself, and, somewhat mortified, took the unfriendly advice. He did withdraw into his corner, wrapping himself round and

round in his many wraps, until he was almost as much muffled up as his companion. And the night was cold, and there was only a very feeble lamp in the coach. He ended by 'snozzling,' as the old lady advised, with his head buried in the high collar of his coat, and as the windows were closed against the penetrating chill of the night, and the atmosphere heavy, fell fast asleep.

He woke with a start some time after, with the sensation of a gust of wind blowing upon him from the coach door. Half bewildered as he came to himself, he saw that the door was open, and caught, with astonished eyes, a momentary glimpse of the face of a young woman, a sudden apparition against the blackness of the night; and then the door was closed sharply and with a clang. The coach was at the foot of a steep ascent beginning to ascend slowly. John sat up suddenly, awake but still bewildered, and rubbing his eyes. The opposite corner was vacant. His plaid lay on the floor where the old lady had tossed it, but she herself had disappeared. He jumped up still confused, and unable to believe his eyes, and groped in the corner. But there was no one there: then he put his head out of the window, and shouted loudly into the night.

LODGINGS AND HOLIDAYS.

In the face of short dividends and diminished incomes, the fact of a steady rise in the rent of apartments at frequented country and seaside resorts, during their respective seasons, is becoming a serious inconvenience, and a source of alarm to those who hitherto have been able to give their families the usual annual outing. The causes leading to this grievance are many, nor does the blame lie entirely at the door of the people who, to make a living, allow strangers to temporarily occupy their rooms at exorbitant prices. We are a gregarious race, and like a flock of sheep, follow blindly where others lead. Every one is anxious to go where others are supposed to be taking their pleasure; nor is this sufficient, for we must all go at the same time, and that time must cover a short six weeks out of a possible fifty-two in the year. Would it be human nature then, if the fortunate possessors of spare rooms did not, when the rush comes, try and make money when favourable opportunity offers? But further, the evil does not end with the departure of the holiday crowd. Prices go up easier than they fall, and elated with success at having secured an exceptional rent for some mere strip of a room, inadequately fitted with the commonest necessities, the deluded owner continues to try to levy blackmail for the rest of the year.

The law of action and reaction is a steady factor both in public and in private life. Changes come, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes with startling suddenness, but when the time is ripe, come they will. Only one ending is possible to such short-sighted policy, and judging from the general depression at once well-frequented localities, the point of toleration for high

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charges is nearly reached. Empty houses, and bankrupt lodging-keepers, have for the last few years been but too common at many favourite watering-places, and those who have had to face these unpleasant experiences will be wise if they profit from them. Another factor is at work, perhaps not so easy for the suffering public to deal with, because the stakes are higher, and the risk proportionally great. Some one—often as not interested owners of a property—'boom' a place, it may be with capabilities of development, but often as not wholly lacking in attractiveness. Money once invested, the speculation has got to run, and holiday folk always athirst for novelties flock in their hundreds to a new place, and so force it into notoriety. Then the accommodation becomes limited, the jerry-builder sets to work to erect shaky terraces and second-rate villas, with views of neither country nor sea; only neighbours' windows, and back-yards are the pleasing boundary of the visitors' vision. Rents go up, and provisions are far beyond London prices; for tradesmen must recoup themselves for the heavy rents they too have to pay, and their higher standard of living has to be taken into consideration.

So the great wheel of life goes round, and as the spending powers of the classes become more limited, those of the masses seem to expand like an elastic band. What may be the eventual result of the endeavour to raise the tone of social life, is a question yet to be solved. Certainly the transition process is a disagreeable jumble. There are ominous signs on the horizon that the probable command of surplus money for mere pleasuring lies in the hands of ubiquitous 'trippers,' who in their thousands are brought by the railway and steamboat companies in all reasonable comfort, and at nominal prices, to be scattered during the summer months broadcast through the length and breadth of the land, sparing neither our choicest scenery, our most fashionable resorts, nor our pet primitive little nooks. It is not that we would selfishly keep to ourselves the enjoyment of Nature's lovely scenery—free gifts for poor and rich alike—or drink in to the exclusion of others the life-giving breezes which blow uncontaminated through the sweet shady woodlands, from over the pulse-beating ocean, or down from the everlasting hills. No! let all share equally God's gifts, and no one thinks of grudging a holiday from daily monotonous toil in crowded towns and close-packed alleys; but one would like to see behaviour, at these times, a little more fitted to a nation which boasts of its civilisation as our own does, and find sea-side and country resorts kept in some sort of order, and less like the bear-garden they become when 'trippers' are let loose amongst us. If the old chronicler Froissart were to come to life again, he would have to alter his record that the proverbial Englishman 'takes his pleasures sadly.' That is a thing of the past, for nowhere on the Continent do we meet with a holiday crowd so rude, so boisterous, and so little dignified, as in England. The throwing about of greasy papers, broken victuals, and empty bottles, strewn 'thick as autumn leaves in Vallombrosa,'

the riotous undisciplined children, and the hustling elders, would not for an instant be tolerated abroad by the authorities, much less by the people themselves.

Every summer that comes round, it becomes more difficult to find a quiet economical place where we may recuperate exhausted nervous energy, and store up renewed thought for the battle of life during the succeeding ten or eleven months. In the cramped space lodgings afford, where home comforts are absent, and our usual occupations in abeyance, the overstrained mother and hard-worked father of a family look for a little peace and repose, at least out of doors, whether it be idling by the shore with the soothing lullaby of the beating waves, or away over the breezy downs, or ensconced in some leafy forest nook, with the swaying branches of oak and beech for music, and the squirrels and birds for company, anywhere indeed where they may enjoy undisturbed the *dolce far niente* of a long summer's day. But this is only vain anticipation, a castle in the air, which reality soon dissipates. The Nemesis of strident bands, always craving for coppers, noisy niggers, cheap trippers, touting owners of char-a-bancs, are constantly in evidence everywhere; and at the outset of a holiday we must, like Dante, read, and bow down to the stern decree, 'Abandon hope all ye who enter here.' How long is patient tolerance of remediable drawbacks to our peaceful holidays to go on without a stand on the part of those who ought to be the stronger party? And why, too, do we fall into such utter thralldom directly our own comfortable homes are exchanged for lodgings, where we submit to dictated hours, bad cooking, dishonest extras, and all the rest of it? When on the subject of reforms another question arises—why we are made to suffer the inconvenience of having small rooms filled up with big double beds, and have to sleep through the hot summer nights on debilitating feather-beds, or on mattresses full of lumps and holes which have not been teased out for years, and the coverings of which, together with bolster and pillows, from want of an annual cleaning, are neither sweet nor wholesome? And this unpardonable laxity of attention to small details that make up the sum of comfort in our daily lives, is not confined to apartments of lower rents, but is too commonly found in those commanding the best prices.

Some change seems desirable in this unsatisfactory holiday scramble, and in the heavy expenditure entailed, which so many now find a burden beyond their legitimate means. One out of many queries for this end suggests itself: Do we not err in elaborating our holidays too much, hesitating to live during the time on a more modest scale, to drop the attitude of superior beings, and to dress more simply?—all changes demanding a certain amount of self-denial, but which will brace us up like a tonic, and induce a double appreciation of home comforts when we return to them. It is only English people who want to carry these about with them, whether they make a move for a long or a short period. The Italian 'Villeggiatura' is an elementary enough affair. An

empty or partially furnished villa, or flat, is secured, a few necessary household gods are transported, sent on before with the baggage by a reduced staff of servants, who put things in order before the family arrives, and the thing is done. No one expects much attendance, and no one grumbles when they have to help themselves and others. What they want is a holiday, and they take it. Elaborate eating and soft places they will have later on, but their temporary enjoyment is secured, and weighs down by a long way the balance of reduced domestic cares and worries, sent for the time into the background. The Austrians and Germans, again, have a sensible plan one longs to see adopted in this country. Beyond the early breakfast no other meals are served in the house, but cheap and excellent restaurants are always at hand, where can be obtained a greater variety of wholesome, well-cooked food, at a less cost of time, money, and temper, than would be possible were the meals all thought out, marketed for, and prepared in a lodging. The constant spreading and removing of meals, the odours ascending from the kitchen, the irritating unpunctuality, and slovenly cooking we all know from our national method, is thus entirely avoided. Daily expenses can be calculated to a fraction, and when the time of flitting arrives, there are no bills pouring in from butcher, baker, and candlestickmaker, with unexpectedly large totals, the crumpled rose-leaves that send us back from our holidays with ruffled tempers and unpleasant suspicions of the general courtesy. Yes! decidedly we carry the burdens of civilisation too much about with us.

Yet another suggestion must often have occurred to the suffering martyrs of a holiday rush, when casting about for some possible alteration of their grievances. Is it necessary for all the family to go away in a body, as the custom now is? In the majority of cases, the older boys and girls are away for the greater part of the year at schools located either in the country, or by the sea. Clearly then the necessity of this universal custom, flying away in a body like a flock of emigrating birds, cannot be on their account. From school to home is their change, and ought to be sufficient; and with home resources for employment, and enjoyment, with insured sanitary surroundings and suitable, well-cooked food—all doubtful items in lodgings—parents would have less anxiety, and be better able to appreciate the companionship of their children, than in the *harum-scarum*, feverish existence that holds good with the immediate flight now fashionable directly holidays set in. The juniors could go away some other time, say—between June and May, half-prank with spring, with summer half-embrowned—when Nature is so freshly beautiful, the days long and balmy, and the nights but a short twilight that links the setting sun with the rosy dawn. Rents would not then be at a premium, as in autumn, and the money thus saved would leave a margin, a nucleus for little outings later on when the bigger and more companionable children were at home. Nor would the benefit of some such arrangement be all on one side. Having a season spreading

over months instead of weeks, for earning their yearly income, letters of lodgings could afford to be less exorbitant in their demands, and the same argument would hold good for tradespeople. At most holiday-resorts shops have to stock goods which are in active demand only a few weeks in the year, and then the risk is great; for the public are proverbially capricious, and may, or may not, arrive as usual, or through bad weather, or a sudden outbreak of sickness, they may hurry away prematurely.

We are aware many difficulties stand in the way of setting right the grievances of our holiday jaunts. That they exist, none deny, and all long for some alleviation. The needed changes must be gradual, but ought not to be difficult to accomplish, if all those dissatisfied with the small amount of pleasure gained in return for their annual outlay of money, determined, individually and collectively, to put in their little wedge of reform to remove the monster of imposition, noisy vulgarity, and low rowdyism, which becomes more rampant every year at all our popular sea-side and country places of resort.

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.*

By SIR WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY FRANCES'S rooms were already well filled when we arrived—later, they were crowded. She welcomed me with her customary kindness. 'I shall never cease to reproach you,' she said; 'but I have forgiven you.'

She was dressed in all her splendour—a blaze of diamonds, a vision of silk, if it was silk, of velvet, if it was velvet. Her queenly stature, her noble figure, her large head and ample cheek, set off her splendid dress; she looked as if this was the only dress she ought to wear; she looked, indeed, a *grande dame de par le monde*.

I presented my cousin. For the moment Robert was staggered. I saw upon his face an expression of weakness quite new to him. It was the weakness of the strong man in the presence, for the first time, of the queenly woman.

She received him with gracious courtesy.

After a few words, I left Robert to talk a little with his hostess. While they stood together, there entered a little old man with shaggy white eyebrows, keen eyes, and a white mane, and a big head, a leonine person. Frances shook hands with him, and then turned to Robert.

'Mr Burnikel,' she said, 'let me introduce you to Lord Caerleon. Mr Burnikel is Member for Shadwell, and a cousin of your friend, Sir George.'

Lord Caerleon shook hands with him. 'On our side, Mr Burnikel, I hope.'

'I have entered the House as an Independent member,' said Robert sturdily.

'Oh!' Lord Caerleon replied drily. 'Yes. I have known several young men announce that intention. But they change it—they change

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it. There is a good deal to be got out of the House by an ambitious man, who goes the right way to work—a great deal—distinction and recognition—that is something—place and power—that is something. You are a lawyer, perhaps.

'No. I am not a member of any learned profession. I am a Master Craftsman—by trade a boat-builder.'

'Oh!' Lord Caerleon refrained from the least expression of surprise. 'But one may imagine that every young man who goes into the House is actuated by some ambition.'

'My ambition is to make a mark in the House—and out of it,' said Robert.

'Then, sir, I wish you every success. And you will speedily discover that in order to make that mark, you must join a Party: that is, our Party—my Party.'

Lord Caerleon left him and walked over to me. He was a former friend of my grandfather, the judge. 'Is that your cousin, George?' he asked. 'That tall, good-looking fellow over there—Member for Shadwell.'

'He is my cousin, certainly, though rather distant.'

'Oh! he said, he was a—a—a boat-builder. Did he speak some kind of allegory?'

'A hundred years ago my great-grandfather and his great-grandfather were partners in a boat-building yard. At the same time, your great-grandfather, Lord Caerleon—'

'Was unknown. Certainly. Yet one does not expect to see an actual boat-builder in a place like this, and looking and talking like a gentleman. You and I, Sir George, belong to the third generation at least of those who were born in the purple of gentleness. This man says he is a Master Craftsman. Do we receive the man with a plane and a chisel in our drawing-rooms?'

'He is a master of labour: he employs many men. I believe he will prove himself to be a Master Craftsman in the craft of oratory and debate. He is the strongest man, Lord Caerleon, the most courageous man and the most finished man that I know. You can't dazzle him. You can't frighten him. And I am quite certain from his first speech that he will carry away the House, as he carries away his constituents. Look after him, Lord Caerleon. Don't forget to reckon with him as soon as you can.'

Thinking of what the man was when first I knew him: how contemptuous of social conventions, how determined to go into the House as a rough craftsman; to set everybody right on all questions of labour and employers; knowing nothing whatever of the ways and manners by which alone anything real can be accomplished; and seeing the man in this salon, quiet and assured, yet strangely unlike the ordinary young man of the West End, I was elated to think of my success.

'He has the air,' said Frances, reading my thoughts, because I was looking across the room, 'of a man who has lived in the best society, but not our own. Has he lived in New York?'

'No. He has only lived in Wapping, a distinguished suburb near the place where you heard him speak.'

'Wapping has then, I suppose, a curiously distinguished society of its own. Has Wapping a nobility, an opera-house, ladies of the world? Seriously, George, how did this man arrive at a distinguished manner as well as a distinguished look? You know—I told you—when I heard him speak, I made up my mind that he was a born orator.'

'Well, Frances, he has practised a very honest trade; that prevents meanness; and he has read enormously, so that his level of thought is elevated; and he takes himself very seriously, so that he is self-confident; and he is quick to observe: so that, altogether, I think you may understand how he has arrived at his present manner.'

'He is not a young man for a young lady. I introduced him to one just now, and they separated five minutes afterwards with a lively look of mutual repulsion. Perhaps he began by telling her, as he told Lord Caerleon, that he was a boat-builder.'

'Very likely.'

Then I retired into a corner and looked on. I saw that Frances looked after this guest with a care which she seemed to bestow upon no others. She talked to him; she introduced him to people, especially to members of the House, and I saw that he was not dazzled—not in the least dazzled—by title or by fine dress, or fine manners. It was impossible to condescend with such a man; most likely he condescended to the condescender.

'I like it, George,' he said, when we found ourselves together. 'I like the crowd and the fine dresses and all. It is amusing. I don't belong to it in the least. That makes it all the more amusing.'

'And the women? How do you like them?'

'Lady Frances is splendid. I do not see any other woman in the place.'

It was filled with women—some young and beautiful; some old and no longer beautiful; all well dressed, and most of them animated. But he had no eyes except for Lady Frances.

Presently all were gone. I alone remained behind.

'Let us sit down, George, for a few minutes' quiet talk. Come into the little room. You may have a cigarette if you like. Now, about that tall cousin of yours. Do you really think that he has the qualities necessary for success? It is not enough to fire off a speech now and then, you know.'

'Well, he says he has these qualities. Whatever he says is always true. Quite a man of his word, you know.'

Frances became thoughtful. 'You know, George,' after a pause, 'I was bitterly disappointed that you did not go into politics. You would have had every kind of help. I cannot tell you half the dreams I had nourished about your success. Everything is possible for such a man as you. And you basely deserted us, and went off boat-building. Oh, heavens! boat-building!'

'I did, Frances. I am a wretch.'

'Well, the Party wants a few young men—good young men. If I can get that big strong man, your cousin, to throw himself heartily into the Party, he may prove himself worthy

of being looked after. Help me with him, George.'

'What am I to do?'

'Bring him to dinner with me. I will have a little dinner of you two first: then a little dinner alone with him: then a little dinner with one or two of the chiefs thrown in. Then—but you understand how a woman works in such a case. I want him for the Party.'

'What can you offer him?'

'Nothing yet. We must see first what he is worth. An ordinary young man would be contented with dining with me: he would then go home and dream of making love to me: then he would come here, and try to make that dream a reality. But a young man with a great future before him would want more than that.'

'What will tempt him then?'

'Power. He wants Power. He would be another Gladstone—another Bismarck. He desires Power above everything. It is the greatest presumption: the greatest audacity.'

Frances sighed. 'Oh!' she said. 'If they had only made me a man! George, there is but one thing in the world that I desire—and that is—Power. I could get it easily, even though I am a woman, if I had a husband strong and able and ambitious, and worth working for. Where is that man? You ought to have been such a man, George, but you're not. You are only a common carpenter. Oh! The grovelling of it!'

CHAPTER XVII.—PARTNERSHIP.

A few days afterwards, Robert came over to the yard. He came during the men's dinner hour, when a delightful calm settles down upon Wapping, and even the cranes and the donkey-engines are silent; when the wagons rumble no longer, and there is no ringing of bells and no hammering of hammers, and no grinding of machines. And we sat upon two workmen's benches, opposite each other, and talked.

'I saw Lady Frances yesterday,' he began; 'she was good enough to invite me to call, and so I did call—and had a long talk with her.'

'Good.'

'She's a splendid woman! That's the kind of woman to back up a man. I used to think that a man wants no help from any woman. I now see that a clever, sympathetic woman who understands things may be of the greatest use.'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Of course she's all for Party. She says I must join her Party, or else there is no chance.'

'You've heard that before, haven't you? Well, there is no chance outside the grooves. I am certain of it.'

'Anyhow, I won't join a Party. I went in an Independent member, and I'll continue an Independent member. Nothing whatever shall induce me to join the rank and file of Party—to run about and say what I am told to say. Nothing, mind you. Not even to get the assistance of that woman.'

He spoke with the determination of approaching submission. His words had a forced ring in them—their exaggeration showed weakness. He was under temptation.

'Then, Robert, farewell, a long farewell, to dreams of greatness!'

'We talked about my speech—and she spoke highly of it. Well, why not? A very good speech it was. When we came to read it next day—how it stood out from the windbags and froth of the rest—you noticed that, George?'

'I did. A very fine speech. Full of solid stuff.'

Robert never pretended to any modesty as regards his own work. He honestly thought it a great deal better than the work of anybody else, and he said so, without any affectation of inferiority. This candour impressed people. Other men it might injure, but not Robert. Very few men, indeed, do really possess a sincere, unaffected admiration for their own powers. Most of us are spoiled by diffidence.

'Of course,' he added, 'she admired the speech.'

'Very good. Next!'

'Oh! Then we began talking about other things. It seems odd that I should be taking advice about my own affairs from a woman, doesn't it?'

'It would have seemed odd three months ago.'

'But, of course, Lady Frances isn't an ordinary woman. She's got the brains of fifty women, and the experience of a hundred put together. What a woman she is!'

'How did she advise you about your own affairs?'

'She asked me about myself. Of course I told her everything there is to tell. Why should I conceal things? I even told her how you have given your evenings for three months or more, to show me what the West-End world was like. She strongly advises me to go into society. "Become one of the world," she says.'

'Did she tell you how to get in? The gates of what she calls the world do not exactly stand open to everybody.'

'I suppose not. What they call Society is divided into circles, and there are circles within circles. And there are political circles. And in them she could launch me—of course, on the usual conditions.'

'Party, of course.'

'Party. No room anywhere, it seems, for the Independent member.'

'And you are an Independent member. It is unfortunate, isn't it?'

'Says I must join a political club. But there are none for Independent members.'

'No. It is unfortunate.'

'Then we talked about the way in which men get on nowadays. No one, not even you, ever before understood my position so perfectly. Whatever I tell her, she catches it in a minute. One would think she had lived next door. And about the ways of men—they don't climb, George, they wriggle—they wriggle, most of them.'

'So I have heard.'

'Wriggling and advertising. One must be like the man who advertises his soap, always before the world.'

'That is, in fact, the first thing, and the second thing, and everything.'

'She told me about one man who has cer-

tainly got on remarkably well—yet not so well as I mean to do, because he hasn't the same ability. This man, who, like me, had no family influence, got into a political club, wrote a paper now and again for one of the magazines, spoke frequently at public meetings, was seen everywhere at private views, and first nights, and at private houses, went into the House, spoke there on occasion and with weight, published a volume of essays, was accepted as a man who went everywhere, long before Society received him at all, and is now married to a woman whose wealth and connections will advance him rapidly.'

'That may be your fate.'

'But the trickery of it!'

'If you want to achieve a definite object, you cannot always choose the way. Nobody but yourself, remember, knows your own motives. What you call trickery may appear to the world as the natural reward of ability.'

'Well—but—I don't know.' He walked to the edge of the quay, looking up and down the river. 'It is a world so different from anything I ever imagined,' he said. 'You have opened out the world to me. I confess that I hesitate to venture upon this kind of path.'

'You don't think you are the only ambitious man in the world, do you? My dear boy, everybody there is ambitious, except the men who have got up as high as they can. And even then, they all want something; a little more social consideration, a decoration. Everybody for himself, anywhere. Nowhere so much as in the city of the setting sun—in the West. In other words, you have discovered that many of your old dreams must be abandoned.'

'I shall wriggle as little as may be. Now, listen carefully, and don't interrupt. I am going to make a proposal to you of the greatest importance.'

'Go on. I will not interrupt.'

'Well, I see very plainly, to begin with, that the way open to me means a good deal of expenditure. I must have good chambers, some place where I can receive people. I must keep myself well groomed.'

'Both points are important.'

'I must have a club. I must cultivate people; there are already plenty of men in the House who want to know me. I must be able to give a dinner occasionally, as Lady Frances advised; and there are the daily expenses which in the West End run away with so much money; one must go about in cabs—it isn't possible to go without cabs; why, here I used to spend nothing at all, from day to day, except our modest housekeeping money. It means money. I must have money, George.'

'Yes, if you are going to live over there. But you've got your business here.'

'I can't live in two places. There you have it. If I am going to get on, I must live in the West End—and I can't carry on this business from Piccadilly chambers, that's quite certain.'

'I'm afraid it's impossible. Shall you sell this business?'

'No, I can't afford to do that. Mustn't burn the boats, you know. But I've thought of a plan, and I'll lay it before you to turn over in

your mind. First of all, are you perfectly serious and in earnest about the boat-building trade? Mind, I never believed it. Do you, really and truly, intend to go into the trade as a living?'

Put in that way, I was staggered. Because, you see, I perceived at once what he was driving at.

'What I thought,' I replied slowly, 'when I came here was, that I might learn the business from you, and that I might then take my small capital, which is no more than three thousand pounds, and start as a boat-builder in one of the Colonies—British Columbia, for example, wherever I could find an opening. That was my plan, subject to my mastering the mysteries of the craft.'

'You have mastered most of them, and you are a first-class hand already. But you can hardly be trusted yet in the buying and the selling.'

'Since I've kept the books for you I've learned something of that as well.'

'Yes, but you can't run alone yet. However, that part of it might be managed. Now for my plan. You've got a good pile, though you call it so little. It's a good deal more than I shall want. Give up the idea of a Colony. Settle here in the old place—you can go on living in the old house if you like; and become my partner—the managing partner. You shall buy your share. Don't think that I want only to get your money, though that will be of the greatest use to me. You will make your solicitor examine the books—for that matter you have the books already in your hands, and he will tell you what you ought to offer if you entertain the proposal. Come, Burnikel & Burnikel it has always been called. There were once two cousins in it, before they quarrelled over the old man's diamonds. Let there be two cousins in it again. Robert and George—they were once. Robert and George they will be again.'

He got up from the bench. 'You want time to decide,' he said. 'Don't press yourself. Take as much time as you like. I will advise you in any difficulty, but I can no longer think for the business. You will have to do that. Turn it over in your mind, and tell me when you have decided.'

So he got up and left me. Then the men came back from their dinner, and the work went on again.

The most remarkable part of the proposal was that we were actually going to reverse the situation, to change places. I was to give up clubs, chambers, friends, society, and everything that belongs to the class in which I had been brought up. As I had no fortune, that was inevitable. But I was to put my cousin in my place: he would give up his business, hitherto his livelihood, and take my place and belong to the world. And I was to take his place down in this deserted city of warehouses, where, except the clergy of the parish and myself, there would be no single resident, who, by any stretch of imagination, could call himself of the gentle class.

Ninety years ago, two cousins, Robert and George Burnikel, were partners; after all these

years, two other cousins, Robert and George Burnikel, were to become partners again.

Ninety years ago Robert and George parted. Robert stayed at the yard, George went west. Now, this situation was reversed. George was to stay at the yard. Robert was going west.

IN A NORWEGIAN FARMHOUSE.

By JOHN BICKERDYKE.

OUR farmhouse is placed on a slope, facing the south, and trending down to the small, shallow, weedy sheets of water where trout are rising. These lochans, as they are sometimes termed in Scotland, are fed by the overflow stream from the great lake, which is held up by a natural dam of rock, a hundred feet or more high, and crossing the valley for, perhaps, a quarter of a mile. All around are mountains, some clothed almost to their summits with pine-trees, others more rugged and wild. There are half-a-dozen small wooden houses within sight; each owned by a more or less prosperous farmer. Our host is a well-to-do man, and with a family of two big, broad-shouldered sons—each two inches taller than their father—and three strapping wenches of daughters. They lead a patriarchal life in this wilderness, and have no difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door.

It is a peaceful summer's evening as our stolkjaerres are dragged up the rough road which winds round the hillocky slope. The painted, wooden farmhouse is built on massive stone foundations; the portion below the woodwork being devoted to a kitchen and brew-house in summer, a store in winter. Opposite the three rough stone steps, which lead up to the entrance, is a smaller, one-storeyed building, thatched with birch bark held down by sods of turf. One room of this is used as an extra sleeping-apartment, while in the other are the spinning-wheels and the loom. A hundred yards down the slope is a new barn, of which Herr Ole is very proud; for it is neatly made of massive planks and timbers, and roofed in with carefully cut slabs of stone, about two feet square, placed diamond fashion: a barn that will last out three generations of men. Some children are playing with a cream-coloured foal, and another foal is just coming out of the room where the spinning-wheels are kept, and down the steps.

The work is over for the day, and the family come out to greet us, though we are unexpected. We find out afterwards that we are the first English who have ever entered the house or, indeed, been seen by any of its inmates. Our guide and driver, Sivert, tells Herr Ole that we have come to fish the big lake behind that great natural dam, and would be glad of a bed and supper. This hospitality is accorded us without a moment's hesitation, and I am shown into a large room, perhaps twenty feet square. The furniture consists of a bare table; a sort of wooden sleeping-box, five feet four inches long, filled with straw; an unvarnished wooden chair, and a low bench fixed to the wall round two sides of the room. On it are the gaily painted boxes of the family; each

member apparently having his or her private chest bearing the name, place of abode, and date of birth of its owner, along with some more or less barbaric design. On a row of pegs placed not far from the ceiling, and extending nearly round the apartment, hang the Sunday clothes of the family, a suit to each peg; the trousers' legs dangling down, and, late on in the dusk, looking as if some unfortunate people had hung themselves in a row.

There is no carpet, no wall-paper, no lath nor plaster. All is good honest wood; above, below, and all around; no varnish, no polish, no stain, no paint—not even on the furniture. No twopenny-halfpenny one-inch weather boarding, or half-inch match-boards as we use in England, but great solid planks and boards which will stand the wear and tear of centuries. On the windows and doors alone is a little paint—a kind of white enamel. In a corner of the room stands a very old kettledrum, and how and why such an instrument of warfare has a place in this peaceful dwelling is for the time beyond my comprehension. There are two big windows, in one of which a pane of glass is wanting, and Sivert tells me that the family are greatly concerned thereat; on my account be it understood, for much ventilation is deemed an evil thing out here. An oval rusty tea-tray is leaning against the wall. It fits the window so far as tops and sides are concerned, leaving ample room for fresh air at the corners, so the matter is soon settled.

There is a pretty rustic scene taking place outside the window, which would require the pen of a Richard Jefferies to properly describe. One of those miniature cows which are found among the mountains—a light fawn colour and well bred—is standing by the side of the palings which fence in a small potato plot; it wears a sort of bridle, with reins, made of fishing-line, by which a maiden is holding it. Seated on an upturned pail is one of the farmer's broad-shouldered sons, who is endeavouring to milk the cow, which kicks at intervals, for the poor creature is ill, her udder tender, and the operation painful. Another girl is standing by the side of the animal, leaning across its neck to keep it quiet, chatting the while. Presently, the aged grandfather, with long flowing hair, and teeth brown and worn down by constant chewing of tobacco, comes wandering up with the feeble and uncertain steps of age. The cow will not yield milk; no, not even to the old man, who takes his place on the upturned pail, moistening his hands; but his oft practised, though dirty fingers are of no avail, and it seems to me that the refractory invalid is led off in more or less disgrace. Secretly, I am glad that the milk we look for presently at tea-time has not come from this particular source.

There is no hand-basin in my room, and no water, so I call Sivert, tell him of my wants, and presently Sameline, the farmer's wife, appears with a basin of water, which she puts down on a chair, and retires. Soap and towels are apparently unneeded in this primitive land, but they are also forthcoming through the medium of Sivert. I note that the slice off a bar of mottled soap, produced for my especial benefit from the depths of one of those big

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boxes, is, during our stay in the house, borrowed whenever any member of the family wants to wash his hands. In the midst of my ablutions, one of the sons strolls in unannounced, sits on a box and watches me. I know exactly six words of Norwegian, so I try their effect on him, which is not exactly electrical. As Sivert afterwards explains to me, 'When you talk Norwegian dey do tink you talk English, and so dey no try to understand,' which is very stupid of them.

We have brought with us eggs, bread and fresh butter, and a lump of gruyère cheese, which has been diffusing its somewhat powerful scent among the clothes and other things in my box, during our travels from Bergen. It is an hour and a half before the trout, which I caught on my way up, are cooked. Norwegians have a weakness for cutting all things into slices, if possible, and food not sliceable, into small pieces. All my trout run about three to the pound, and are divided into four or five portions, just as though they were eels. But they are admirably boiled, and in due course placed on a side-table in an adjoining room, where the doctor is to sleep, he also having a five feet four inch box filled with straw. Two knives, some salt in a piece of paper, and two tea-cups are on the table. We ask Sivert to see if the good people cannot provide us with forks, teaspoons, saucers, and a milk jug. For the latter, Sameline brings in an antique china bowl, full of milk, and two curious ancient Norwegian silver spoons, with flat handles and quite round shallow bowls, used to dip the milk out of the basin.

Sivert sits down with us, as a matter of course, and very skilfully skins and takes the bones from the small chunks of trout by means of a knife, a piece of dissection which the doctor notes with professional interest. It would seem that forks are usually dispensed with in this part of the world, but two very doubtful ones (I say doubtful because it is not clear of what metal they are made—perhaps they were once upon a time silver-plated), after a long search, are discovered in a box hidden away under the bed. All these things come in driblets, and by the time the meal is set out, the trout are cold and our hunger not decreased, for it is now, if you please, eleven P.M., though still very light, and we have had no food since two o'clock.

As soon as the not-altogether-gargantuan feast commences, the farmer and the whole family, except the grandfather, troop solemnly into the room, stand in a semicircle and watch us feeding, just as if we were some strange creatures at the Zoo. In fact, I believe that we are really greater curiosities to them than the lions and tigers are to Master Tommy in Regent's Park.

After supper I have a happy thought. I have read somewhere that the Norwegian children are exceedingly fond of sweets, and, owing to the heavy tax on sugar, have few opportunities of eating them; so I bought a pound in Bergen, and this I hand round. The whole family solemnly help themselves, and, with deep gratitude depicted in their faces, come up to us, shake hands with both the

doctor and myself, and say, 'Tak.*' I give some cigars to the farmer and the two sons, the latter never having before smoked such a thing. The thrift of the Norwegian is shown in the treatment of these cigars by the youths. They smoke for five minutes, then carefully extinguish the burning end and place the cigar away in some corner of the house. The next morning I see them having another five minutes' smoke, and these cigars actually last for over two days, being taken in homeopathic doses at intervals of about two hours. Finally the ends are cut up and used in grandfather's pipe.

When I come to turn in, I find that a gorgeous woollen blanket of many colours—one of the products of the loom in the little house opposite—has been spread over the straw in my box, and there are two others to cover me. But before I am allowed to go to bed, the whole family, without exception, come into my room, examine all my things, first inquiring the English name of them, and then giving me the Norwegian.

'Engelsk?' says Herr Ole interrogatively, pointing to my razor.

'Razor,' say I.

'Ah so, razor. In Norsk, barberkniv,' he informs me. And so on through brush, comb, nail scissors, and all the things which Englishmen deem necessary for making the toilet; finishing up with sundry items of fishing-tackle which I have laid out on the table. My magnificent disregard of money in using silk for a fishing-line astonishes them. With the aid of a dictionary I tell them of what it is composed. 'No! it must be cotton, or hemp.' But I stick to my silk, and finally convince them, and they evidently regard me as a very thriftless sort of person.

It is now as dark as it will be during this short summer night, and Mrs Sameline has brought into my room a curious old repoussé work Swedish candlestick, with twisted stem, in which is a home-made, tapering, tallow candle nearly two feet in length. I am very tired, and though immensely interested in all these things, should be better pleased if the family would take into consideration my doubtless foolish English prejudices and forbear from spitting on the floor; in other respects my visitors are most clean. Each and all of them have removed their wooden shoes before entering the room, and are walking on the bare floor with their stockinged feet. The grandfather, in particular, takes a kindly interest in me, and sits on the edge of my bed chewing tobacco and acting after the manner of chewers. The candle growing dim, he snuffs it with his fingers, and drops the lighted fragment of wick on the floor, extinguishing it with his stockinged foot. Finally, some of them wander out. The last to go is the eldest son, and he, I believe, has a sort of morbid desire to see what an Englishman looks like when undressed. But I do not intend to satisfy his wishes in this respect, and by dint of 'god nat' many times repeated, induce him to go. But he has learned of me the English of this expression, and ten

* *Anylice*, 'Thank.'

minutes later puts his shaggy head in at the door, grins, jerks out 'Good-night,' retreats, and I see him no more.

A good deep bed of straw with a warm woollen rug over it is not an uncomfortable thing, provided there is leg room, which in this case is wanting. But after these long journeyings, fishing by the way, one is thankful for anything in the shape of a bed, and heaven forbid that I should criticise the kindly hospitality of these good people. For a few minutes there is a great thumping about overhead, for the common sleeping-room of both girls and boys appears to be above, and neither men nor Norwegian farm lasses tread very lightly. There is a great joke going on—it is to say 'Good-night' to each other in English. How they laugh over it! I can hear every word they say in this wooden house. Let me here say that although sleeping arrangements of this kind appear to be quite common in the wilder parts of Norway, there are no more moral people in the world than the Norwegians of the west coast.

The doctor, who was saved from the visitation of the previous night, is up betimes the next morning and wakes me at an early hour. These farm-people seem to care nothing about sleep during the summer months, having, I suppose, an overdose of it in the winter; for they have been up hours ago, shaving away at little patches of grass among the rocks with their small hand-scythes, not much larger than three 'barberknives,' and nearly as sharp.

While Madame Sameline is preparing some more trout for breakfast, and apparently much puzzled about frying them in butter, a method which we had suggested to her through Sivert, I wander among the farm-buildings, and with, I hope, a pardonable curiosity, poke my nose into a number of places where I have no business. In one little wooden storehouse are sacks of meal, and barrels containing salted herrings of evil odour. A little way down the hillside is a tiny hut, some eight feet square, through the turf roof of which blue smoke is oozing. I look in here and see the farmer's eldest son working at a small forge, fashioning a new set of shoes for the mares which are to take us on our journey in a day or two. The animals, with musical bells fastened to their necks by a leather collar, and with foals running by their side and taking an early but spasmodic breakfast, are feeding on the short sweet grass near this little smithy. Two old, and evidently not often used, *stolkjaerres* have been dragged out from some shed and placed in front of the house containing the loom, to be prepared for the continuation of our journey. The shaft of one has been broken and has evidently been spliced that morning with a piece of fishing-line. Bearing in mind that the roads are bad and the hills steep, that there are no traces, and a great deal of weight is placed on the ponies' shoulders, a nervous person might not feel altogether happy in contemplating the prospect of a journey in these particular conveyances.

I try to take stock of the farmer's possessions. Imprimis, there is a good stout timber-built red-tiled house, and the more old-fashioned

loom-house, which, I daresay, was the dwelling-place of an earlier generation. There are one or two small sheds used as stores, the big barn I have mentioned, and the little smithy. Close to the house is an all-too-small potato patch, and round it grows fine grass full of sweet herbage. Quaintly cut out of the grass in sundry places are a few square yards of land devoted to grain crops. By the edge of the potatoes are about twenty hop plants. Most of the cows and cattle are away on the common grazing grounds up the mountains. It is by no means a small farm, and I am told the tax paid to the State for it is about fifteen pounds a year. There is no hired labour; everything is done by the man and his family, and never have I met with more contented, happy, prosperous people. In the stone basement beneath the room in which we have our meals, the farmer is busy brewing two or three barrels of beer; while over a wood fire on an open hearth, Mrs Sameline is frying our trout.

Earlier in the morning the doctor has told me, with much amusement, that on his giving out some tea for breakfast, Sivert has said that more tea was unnecessary as the leaves which were used overnight would do again. 'Of course I told them to throw away the tea-leaves,' says the doctor, 'and the man seemed quite surprised.'

While in the kitchen, Sivert comes up to me with serious face. 'Do you think I should throw away the tea-leaves which were used yesterday? They are very good.' From this I gather that they look upon the doctor as a wasteful, thriftless sort of person, whose judgment in these matters is of no account; but pay me the compliment of regarding me as prudence personified, and as one not likely to fall in with such wicked waste.

'Don't you think, Sivert, that Mrs Johannesen would like those tea-leaves?' I query.

'Oh! yes, she would,' says Sivert without hesitation, and so we settle the matter and please everybody, particularly Sameline; but it is quite clear the doctor has fallen in their estimation.

Sivert announcing that breakfast will be ready shortly, I return to the house, and see through an open door the eldest daughter busy at her sewing-machine. She is sitting in a tiny cupboard of a room, in the angle of which is a corner cupboard, having wrought-metal hinges and finely carved oak doors. It must be centuries old, and contrasts strangely with the modern machine the girl is using.

The farmer and his family are now so busy that they withstand the strong temptation to see the Englishmen eat with forks. One of the girls offers us *fladbrød* this morning, a contrivance evolved out of meal and water. I believe it can be easily imitated by means of a disc of stout whitey-brown paper about two feet in diameter. The delicate, crisp, short eating *fladbrød* of the hotels is very different from this stuff, which is tough, and requires excellent teeth for its proper mastication. On this, potatoes, porridge, and herrings, these people seem principally to live; with the addition of some trout in the summer. Green vegetables they do not trouble to grow, and for

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lack of these purifiers, eating too many fish, and perhaps owing to the lack of ventilation in their houses during the long winter nights, scrofula and leprosy are all too common. Apple cultivation is steadily on the increase; but the people might none the less turn their attention with great advantage to the kitchen garden.

During breakfast rain commences. As soon as our frugal meal is over we sally forth, clad in macintoshes, ascend the slope of that great rocky dam, and spend the day on the beautiful lake, catching most excellent, pink-fleshed trout. In the evening, when we sup, the family again surrounds us.

And this is very much our life in this primitive spot. The curiosity of the people concerning us, and our feeling of strangeness, gradually wear off. As our hosts begin to know us better, and we them, our regard and esteem for each other increases.

Stay, I have almost forgotten to explain the mystery of the kettledrum. I sound Sivert on the subject, and he tells me that the farmer's eldest son, like all young men in Norway, has been drilled for a soldier and has developed strong musical tastes which have led to his being appointed drummer. Word is passed round the family that I have asked about the drum, and on our second evening a deputation waits upon me, headed by Sivert, to inquire if I would like to hear the drum played. I weakly say 'Yes,' and about the time that I am longing to turn in, the whole family again troops into my room, the eldest son arming himself with long sticks, shoulders the drumming, and fires off volleys of rolls, beats, tattoos, and other things at my unfortunate head. I say 'Mange tak' many times, but the more I thank him the more he plays, until his arms weary and then, thank Heaven! I am left in peace. The moral is that English travellers in Norway should not be inquisitive in the matter of drums.

LONDON'S GREAT LANDOWNERS.

LITTLE could the owners of the rural manors which encircled the London of medieval times have foreseen the almost fabulous value which would one day attach to their lands. The vast increase in the numbers of those who are drawn, whether by business or pleasure, to the capital of the Empire, has caused every available spot in close proximity to town to be covered with houses, whereby an artificial value has been given to land the agricultural worth of which is little more than a quarter of a million. To-day, through pressure of population, it is said to be worth three hundred millions, without the buildings upon it. The oldest landowners in Middlesex are the Russells, and it may be convenient to begin with them in giving some account of London's greater landlords. At the dissolution of the religious houses, the garden of the Abbey at Westminster, and the lands belonging to it, was granted by Edward VI. to his uncle the Duke of Somerset, and, upon his attainder, came back to the Crown. Then in May 1552, we find a patent granted to John, Earl of Bedford, of the convent garden lying in

the parish of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, with seven acres, called Long Acre, of the yearly value of six pounds six shillings and eightpence. The right to the market which had come to be held here, was granted by Charles II. to William, Earl of Bedford, by letters-patent in 1671. At the present day the gross revenue derived from it is said to be somewhat over twenty-five thousand pounds a year, a considerable portion of which sum is laid out in market expenses. Besides Covent Garden, the Russell family possesses considerable property in the districts of Bloomsbury and St Giles. At one time this estate belonged to the Earls of Southampton—the manor of St Giles having been sold for six hundred pounds to the trustees of Henry, Earl of Southampton, in the reign of James I. This, together with the manor of Blemund, formerly belonging to a Leper Hospital, descended to the fourth Earl of Southampton, at whose death in 1668 it became the property of his daughter and co-heiress, Lady Rachel Wriothesley, who by her marriage with the celebrated William Lord Russell, brought this estate of about two hundred and forty-five acres into the Bedford family. The old manor-house of the Blemunds stood on the site of the present Bedford Place. Another large property in this neighbourhood, owned by Lord Northampton, is situated in the parishes of St James, Clerkenwell, and St Mary, Islington, much of it consisting of very poor houses in a working-class district. Canonbury Manor came into the Compton family by the marriage of the heiress of Sir John Spencer, a citizen of London, who died in 1609, with William Lord Compton.

The owner of the most fashionable district of London is the Duke of Westminster. This extensive property at the West End was acquired by the marriage in 1676 of Sir Thomas Grosvenor with Miss Mary Davies, the only child of Alexander Davies of Ebury Manor—which, roughly speaking, is represented by the Grosvenor estate of to-day. The boundary of the estate, which is situated in the parishes of St George, Hanover Square, and St John, Westminster, begins at the Marble Arch on the south side of Oxford Street, runs down the centre of Oxford Street, almost to South Molton Street, and passing down Davies Street, takes in a small portion of Berkeley Square (with Thomas's Hotel), and including both sides of Mount Street, runs up the middle of Park Lane to the Marble Arch again. The Belgravia part of the estate begins at St George's Hospital, runs down the centre of Grosvenor Place to the Buckingham Palace Road, and passes down the western side of Vauxhall Bridge Road almost in a straight line to the river Thames, thence running along the river bank eastward as far as the Grosvenor Canal. The property does not comprise Sloane Square, Cadogan Place, or Lowndes Square, but includes all Belgrave Square and Wilton Crescent, the boundary running up again almost to the Knightsbridge Road.

The Millbank estate near the Houses of Parliament also belongs to the Grosvenor family. The collection of pictures now at Grosvenor House began to be formed here at Peterborough House, which was pulled down in 1809, to

make way for Millbank Prison, now demolished in its turn. Many of the leases on the Grosvenor part of the estate have recently fallen in, and a great deal of rebuilding has taken place, the aspect of this neighbourhood being completely changed. Probably no other London estate has been so much improved of recent years. Grosvenor Gardens were rebuilt when the erection of the Grosvenor Hotel and the Victoria Railway Station necessitated broad approaches and handsome houses in this vicinity. Later on, Hereford Gardens, half of Grosvenor Place, part of Grosvenor Crescent, and so forth, have been rebuilt, as well as nearly the whole Oxford Street frontage of the estate. The names of the streets and squares in both districts are connected in some way with the history of the family. Thus Eccleston, Chester, and Belgrave Squares are named after different portions of their Chester estates. Davies Street recalls the heiress of Ebury Manor, which in its turn gives its name to a street in Belgravia. The Dorsetshire mansion of a dowager-duchess gives us Motcombe Street, while Halkin Street is named after a property in Flintshire. The value of the Grosvenor portion of the estate must have recently been greatly augmented by the falling in of so many leases, and by the erection of better built and more spacious residences in Mount Street, Duke Street, Aldford Street, and so on.

An estate adjoining the Belgravia part of the Duke of Westminster's property belongs to Earl Cadogan, and has recently been much developed. The fine red brick houses in Hans Place, Cadogan Square, Pont Street, Lower Sloane Street, and so forth, have attracted many of the rich and fashionable to this district; and an old inhabitant would hardly recognise the semi-rural aspect of Chelsea under its changed conditions. This estate, which bids fair to rival that of the Duke of Westminster in value and importance, was brought into the family by the marriage of General Cadogan, a celebrated officer of Horse Guards in the wars of Marlborough, with the daughter and heiress of Sir Hans Sloane, who had acquired the manor of Chelsea in 1712 from the family of Cheyne.

More details are available as to Lord Portman's London estate, which consists of about two hundred and sixty acres. The estate commences at the junction of Richmond Street and the Edgeware Road, and includes Montagu and Manchester Squares, Great Cumberland Place, Baker Street, part of Marylebone Road, and other well-known localities, as well as the poor neighbourhood of Lisson Grove. It is let, generally speaking, upon ninety-nine years building leases, dating from the years 1816 to 1822. In the year 1512, the Lord Prior of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell granted a lease for fifty years to John and Johan Blennerhasset of a farm exactly conterminous with the present Portman property. In 1532 Chief-justice Portman bought the reversion of their house from the executors of the Blennerhasset, the land being subsequently acquired in fee-simple in the reign of Mary. The Seymour family at one time possessed the property on the termination of the male line of the Portmans. Event-

ually, however, it reverted to William Berkeley, whose mother had been a niece of the last Portman. These changes give us a clue to the names of various streets in the locality, such as Seymour Street, Berkeley Street, and Portman Square. Bryanston Square recalls the name of a village near Blandford in Dorsetshire, as Orchard Street does that of Orchard Portman in Somersetshire. The two Quebec Streets furnish us with the approximate date of their building, that is to say, during the war in Canada in the middle of the last century. Much of the estate is occupied by the shops of West-End tradesmen, and various improvements have been carried out, though not to so large an extent as on other large London estates. Leases are generally renewed for a period of twenty-five years.

A large contiguous estate belongs to the Portland family. To trace the manner in which it descended to its present owners, we must go back a couple of hundred years to the time when John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, purchased the lands of Tyburn or Marylebone for the sum of seventeen thousand five hundred pounds. The Park at Marylebone, known to-day as the Regent's Park, was specially reserved to the Crown. The daughter of this nobleman, the Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles, married to Robert Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, inherited the lands of Tyburn in 1711. Her only daughter Margaret married William Bentinck, second Duke of Portland, thus bringing the estate into that family. At the present time its northern boundary takes in a large portion of the Marylebone Road, including Madame Tussaud's, where the last part of the property is situated. The boundary then runs down the eastern side of Marylebone Lane as far as Oxford Street. That street, between Wells Street and Marylebone Lane, forms its southern boundary. The lower part of Portland Place and the upper part of Regent Street belong to the Crown. The Portland Marylebone estate does not belong to the present Duke, but to the daughters of the fourth Duke. The history of the devolution of the estate upon its present owners explains the origin of most of the street names in the locality. Thus we have Portland Place, Holles Street, Harley Street, and Oxford Street—the last named in honour of the accession of Robert Harley to that title. The wife of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, was an heiress of the Cavendishes of Welbeck, which explains the names of another street and square. The Harleys were originally of Wigmore Castle, which name survives in a principal street in this neighbourhood. Another portion of the Portland estates embraces nearly all Portland Town, that is, the district bounded on the south by Regent's Park, from Primrose Hill to St John's Wood Chapel, embracing Avenue Road.

One other family in the central district of London may be mentioned as owners of an estate bordering on the Euston Road and recording their name in Fitzroy Square. The manor of Tottenham or Tottenham was held on lease in the reign of Charles II., by Isabella, Countess of Arlington, who married the Duke of Grafton, son of Barbara Villiers, Duchess of

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Cleveland. Later on, one of the Fitzroys was created Earl of Southampton, and acquired this manor in fee-simple. The eldest son of the Duke of Grafton, the Earl of Euston, has his name recorded in Euston Road and Euston Square, though the Southampton branch of the Fitzroy family are the present owners of the estate. A small but important estate in the Strand, including Norfolk Street, Surrey Street, Howard Street, and other thoroughfares between the Strand and the Embankment, belongs to the Duke of Norfolk. The Howard family is one of the oldest landowners in Middlesex, being preceded by the Russells and Cecils only. The value of this estate since the formation of the Thames Embankment must have been greatly increased. The site adjoining the Outer Temple—the former residence of the Earl of Essex—was occupied by the Bishops of Bath, whose rights were usurped by that Seymour who was brother to the Protector Somerset. At his death, Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, bought it for forty-one pounds six shillings and eightpence, and in 1579 it devolved upon the Howard family. The Savoy estate belongs to Her Majesty, having been settled with other property of the Duchy of Lancaster on the sovereign for the time being by the son of John of Gaunt, the first Duke of Lancaster. Cecil Street, Salisbury Street, and neighbouring property still belong to Lord Salisbury.

A few words in conclusion as to the large landowners in outlying districts of London, such as Lord Amherst. The Tyssens were formerly merchants in Holland, who settled at Hackney near London in the reign of James II., and purchased the manor in the year 1600. The property passed in the latter part of the last century by marriage to the Anhursts of Rochester, and subsequently to the Kentish family of Daniel, who thereupon assumed the surname and arms of Tyssen. The additional name of Anhurst was then taken. The present head of the Tyssen Anhurst family was recently created a peer under the style of Baron Amherst of Hackney. De-Beauvoir Town to the north of Hoxton is part of this estate, and records the marriage of a certain Francis Tyssen of Shacklewell to a daughter of Richard de Beauvoir of Guernsey. Another landowner, possessing states in Bermondsey, Southwark, Camberwell, and Newington, has been recently ennobled as Lord Llangattock, better known as Mr Rolls of the Hendré. The Rolls property includes the thoroughfare (recently celebrated in noble verse !) known as the Old Kent Road.

The property of the Pratt family is situated in the St Pancras district. Charles Pratt, Earl Camden, became possessed of the estate which now is called Camden Town by his marriage with the daughter of Nicholas Jeffreys about the middle of the last century. St Pancras seems to have been one of the many prebendal manors around London, and was held by a Canon of St Paul's. A separate manor appears to have passed into the hands of the Cantlo or Cantilupe family, and under its present corrupted name of Kentish Town is practically owned by the Pratts, though it is said to be subject to a nominal rent to the prebendary. Another hamlet of St Pancras, known as Somers

Town, is named after the family of its present proprietor, Earl Somers.

It will be seen that the corporation of the City of London, the Livery Companies, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have been omitted from the foregoing account of London's great landowners.

CHANGES IN PRONUNCIATION.

It requires no very profound knowledge of English literature to ascertain that the pronunciation of the language has undergone a vast change during the last three centuries. The shrewd conjecture has, indeed, more than once been hazarded that the works of the Elizabethan dramatists would be unintelligible to a modern audience if the native and original pronunciation were adhered to; and certain, at all events, it is that in many well-known passages of Shakespeare the very rhythm of the line imperatively demands a strange and unaccustomed accentuation of certain words. With the peculiarities of a later period most people are sufficiently acquainted. That *gold* was *gould* and that *china* was *chaney* during the Augustan era is matter of common knowledge; and who can forget Pope's description of Atticus:

Dreading even fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obleeping that he ne'er obleeped?

The last-mentioned mode, as well as the two others, lingered on well into the present century, and was habitual with Lord John Russell; though they are all, probably, by this time as rare as *Rooshia* for *Russia*, and rarer than *Spaw* for *Spa*.

What we are not quite so apt to realise is that in our own day similar changes are taking place. No doubt it requires a considerable length of time before a marked alteration of the sort becomes generally or universally adopted in conversation, and even a longer period before it percolates from speech into poetry. Why there should be these perpetual transitions is a question to which it would be as presumptuous to give a hasty answer as to decide off-hand by what strange concatenation of cause and effect the once abhorred 'split infinitive' has thrust itself into every newspaper and magazine. We can only note two strong tendencies which have manifested themselves during the last quarter of a century.

The first of these is the tendency to throw the accent back as far as possible in words of more than one syllable. People used to look at the contents of a book if they wished to grasp its details; now they dip into the contents in order to pick up the details (rhyming almost with 'beetles'). The Inland *Révénué* has been almost wholly displaced by the Inland *Révenue*, and few indeed are left to *contémplate* the pictures in the illustrated papers; for all who have any pretensions to modernity either *contémporate* or *illústrate*. A few changes of the kind have hitherto failed to commend themselves to a fastidious taste. Thus, though it may be a mark of doubtful gentility and breeding to discourse freely of *manâre*, you are not likely to mend the matter by calling it *mânure*. The pursuer's statement of claim and the

defender's answer to it in a Scotch lawsuit, still, happily, compose the *record*, and the strangeness of *record* would attract attention; yet when the final *décree* has in some mysterious manner become *décree*, and the pronunciation of clerks has become that of advocates, there is no knowing what may happen. So *déceased* becomes in the mouth of many *déceased*; and we question if nowadays any schoolboy would come by the hearty flogging he deserves if he alluded to Swift's *inkwery* (with an emphasis on the *ink*) into 'The Conduct of the *Al-lies*.' This unjustifiable distortion of 'inquiry' is perhaps the least lovely fruit of the tendency in question, and is believed to be peculiar to North Britain, though in point of ungainliness it is run hard by *épiry* for *expiry*. The subject has ceased to be interesting (except on the stage), and is merely interesting, but it might be worth following out for all that.

The second tendency to which we have alluded might be regarded by an optimist as a strong testimony to the efficacy of the Education Acts; by a pessimist as a melancholy illustration of the mischiefs produced by false

analogy. Every boy or girl comes by a certain amount of spelling; and *nearly* every boy or girl, heedless of the warnings with which the English language bristles, forthwith proceeds to jump to some tempting but erroneous conclusion, illustrating most aptly the process of arguing from the known to the unknown. Thus a child, discovering the orthography of 'jerk,' straightway begins to talk of *Burkshire* for *Barkshire*, of *Durby* instead of *Darby*, of *Hurtford* instead of *Hartford*. And so the true and racy and vernacular pronunciation is lost by degrees. One longs for the days when, according to Lord Brougham, Mr Fox habitually spoke of the capital as *Lunn'on*, of Birmingham as *Brummagem*, of a merchant as a *marchant*, of a shire as a *sheer*, just as Mr Windham would speak of doing things 'a' purpose.' How our present unfortunate tendency is to be arrested, it is difficult to see; but perhaps the literature of the 'kailyard,' which has left scarcely a village in these isles without its historian, may at least contribute substantial assistance towards preserving uncontaminated and unspoilt the pronunciation of our local names.

THE TENTH MUSE.

'Sporting literature has been termed the tenth Muse.'

A DISCOVERY of interest has recently been made, And some little curiosity is here and there displayed; It has interested circles so remotely placed apart, As the readers of the *Sportsman* and the lovers of Greek art.

We had all of us imagined in the days when we were young,
When as schoolboys we enjoyed the verse which classic bards had sung,
When we revelled in our Horace, and knew Homer's ev'ry line,
That the number of the Muses had been limited to nine.

But although we may have thought 'enough' was better than 'a feast,'
We are told the Muses' family has since then been increased;

With the new pronunciation and the changing thoughts of men,

We must greet the new-found sister, and address the 'Nine' as 'Ten.'

It may interest philanthropists to hear it has been urged
Here's a striking new example of a 'tenth' which was 'submerged';

For she was not known for centuries upon the earthly stage,
Though in medieval times she must have been past middle age.

For in good old days there must have been some sportsmen stout and bold,
And some good old songs were sung, no doubt, and good old stories told;

When old Rameses, for instance, shot his game in regal style,

And when Pentaur sang his praises, in the valley of the Nile.

We can welcome her, new risen, as one greets a new-learned truth

Which, though older than the hills, yet blooms in everlasting youth.

Not a case of creeping weakness could the Muses' sister feel

As she cantered through the centuries from Nimrod to John Peel.

We can fancy her a damsel yet, appropriately clad,
In the classic drapery of Greece, when Greece was young and glad;

Or can picture her in modern dress, divided skirt and spats,

In an easy Norfolk jacket and the newest thing in hats.

And she teaches her disciples what is best in earthly song—

To be tender to a fault, but set their foot upon a wrong;

And, when writing of their prowess and proficiency in sports,

To distinguish 'twixt romances and historical reports.

When the cricketer of sixty tells how he was wont to bowl,
And the old crack shot recounts his bags, she teaches self-control,

And she checks, by gently hinting that the truth should be exact,

That exuberance of fancy which is not confined to fact.

Antiquarians and sportsmen, and, we might say, all mankind

Should rejoice to sing the praises of this latest modern 'find':

Would some scholar kindly help to make her better known to fame,

And from out his inner consciousness evolve the Muse's name?

C. J. B.

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